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White, Andrew Dickson

An open letter to
Gov. Culberson of Texas

[S.I.]

[1896]

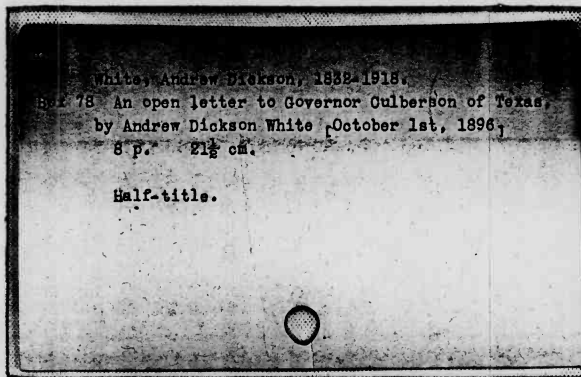
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AN OPEN LETTER

TO

GOVERNOR CULBERSON

OF TEXAS,

BY

ANDREW DICKSON WHITE. 1832-

ms. April 6 1920 Jones

OPEN LETTER.

CORNELL UNIVERSITY,
ITHACA, N. Y.,
October 1st, 1896.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY,
GOVERNOR CULBERSON, OF TEXAS.

SIR:—

You have doubtless already learned that both you and Mr. Bryan have been deceived regarding the letter of Prince Bismarck to you, and that the most important part of it, as first published, is a forgery.

If you are not already aware of that fact, allow me to commend to you that eminent Democratic authority, the *New York World*, of September 26th, which gives the original letter in German, with an honest translation by an expert, side by side with the dishonest translation which has been foisted upon your Excellency and Mr. Bryan; the translation which you have used containing a long paragraph favoring the immediate and independent action of the United States in favor of bimetallism, which does not exist in the original.

Of course I acquit you both of intentional deceit, believing you both too high minded to profit knowingly by this forged interpolation. The American people will doubtless regard your honesty in this matter as unimpeachable, whatever they may think regarding the acuteness of your judgment.

But what are the American people to think of a cause which resorts to such a glaring criminal expedient, and which has not hesitated to exhibit you

and your candidate in the light of dupes before sixty millions of your fellow-citizens? Will this not go far to convince them that your party, having failed in argument, has found it necessary to resort to the cheapest of frauds in order to bolster up the cause of silver monometallism, which, for some time past, has been gradually sinking in all civilized countries?

Granting, as I do, that you and Mr. Bryan have been duped as regards this letter, what justification can be found in it, whether with or without the forged interpolation, for the unlimited coinage of silver? What the letter, as published, supports is *bimetallism*, but the inevitable result of unlimited silver coinage, under one of the simplest laws of nature, is silver *monometallism*, which neither Prince Bismarck nor any other statesman in the civilized world, of the slightest authority, has ever supported, or would ever support, for a moment.

But, even conceding that the letter, with or without its forged interpolation, proves that Prince Bismarck favors the unlimited coinage of silver in the United States, I respectfully submit that your Excellency's confiding application to the Prince, for his opinion on this subject, and the use of his reply made by yourself and Mr. Bryan, is possibly the most farcical event in American history.

My reasons for this opinion are as follows:

As Minister of the United States to the German Empire in 1879, '80 and '81, I carefully observed the demonetization of silver in Germany, which reached its consummation during those years. My instructions from our own government, and my personal feeling as an American citizen, led me to watch the matter closely.

Possibly Mr. Bryan and your Excellency will be amazed to learn that the controlling and directing agent in that demonetization was none other than your kind correspondent, Prince Bismarck himself; at that time the all-powerful Chancellor of the German Empire. He

ordered it, saw it carried out, and brought German finance upon a gold basis, where it still remains.

Somewhat over half of the vast mass of silver thus reduced to bullion was sold by the German government; but the price ran so low that the sales were stopped, and the German Treasury was left with an enormous quantity of this depreciated money in its coffers, amounting, if I remember rightly, to something over one hundred millions of dollars.

Of course, shrewd German statesmen and financiers from that day to this have been looking around to see whom they could find, weak enough, or foolish enough, to take this bullion off their hands.

A little of it — say two millions of dollars — Germany managed to work off upon poor Egypt under the Khedive Tewfik; and as Bismarck is really a patriotic, far-sighted statesman, he would naturally be glad to find a similar dupe on this side of the Atlantic, and to unload the remainder upon the United States at say twice its market value.

Next to the great silver-mine monopolists in our own country, whose interests Mr. Bryan and yourself are supporting, he will doubtless be the happiest of men if our people are deluded into the policy your party supports of thus playing their game by giving a fictitious value to silver.

As a simple matter of fact, of which I was directly and officially cognizant, Prince Bismarck utterly declined to take part in any general scheme of bimetallism without the co-operation of Great Britain, though the United States and France, jointly and officially, united in urging it upon his government. And when our State Department sent over a special expert of high character and qualifications, the Hon. George Walker, afterwards Consul-General of the United States at Paris, with express instructions to discuss the subject with the Chancellor, Prince Bismarck refused to

enter into any such discussion himself, or even to receive Mr. Walker at all.

Prince Bismarck is, first of all, as many of his victims beside your Excellency and Mr. Bryan have sad occasion to know, a great German patriot, devoted above all things to German interests as he understands them.

Hence it was that he demonetized silver and brought Germany on a gold basis; and for the same patriotic reasons which are now leading the great Russian Minister of Finance, Mr. De Witte, to do the same thing. Hence it was, too, that Prince Bismarck did his best to exclude from Germany our American agricultural products, especially our pork and potatoes, under the plea of trichina in one and Colorado bugs on the other; and hence, doubtless, it is, that he shows his German patriotism by obligingly suggesting to you, and through you to the American people, a policy which would profit Germany to the amount of about fifty millions of dollars; to say nothing of comfortable profits to the German bullion brokers.

Possibly he thinks that if the American people are lavish enough to make a free gift of several hundred millions of dollars to the silver mine monopolists and bullion brokers of this and other countries, we can afford to give to Germany such a bagatelle as say fifty millions.

But where does your request for the advice of Prince Bismarck, in a matter so vital to the United States, leave you personally, and the candidate of your party, who, with you, has been thus deluded?

Since the spider's famous invitation to the fly there has been nothing of this sort so pathetic; but there is a touching difference between that case and this, which I trust your Excellency will allow me to point out to you. The fly on that momentous occasion knew too much to go to the spider for advice. It was the spider that volunteered it.

And as your Excellency attributes so much importance to Prince Bismarck's opinions regarding *financial* policy, why not yield an equal belief to his well-known views regarding *industrial* policy? You are, of course, aware that, as Chancellor of the Empire and Chief of the Prussian Ministry, he was the most eminent and uncompromising champion of a protective tariff.

Why then, if his advice is so good in behalf of this Populistic doctrine of free silver, is it not equally cogent in favor of the Republican doctrine of protection?

If you think that the ex-Chancellor writes you in an affectionate spirit towards Democracy, or toward the United States in general, and Texas in particular, permit me to suggest that you ask your respected Texan fellow-citizen, Mr. Lasker, for his opinion on this subject. He will, perhaps, give information of which your Excellency appears to be strangely ignorant, respecting the treatment of the resolutions of the United States Congress regarding Mr. Lasker's eminent brother—resolutions which emanated from a Texan member of that body, and which were spurned and returned to the United States contemptuously by the great German statesman.

How a Governor of Texas could, in a crisis like this, ask the advice of a foreign statesman, who had thus grossly insulted his State and country, utterly passes my comprehension; and how a candidate for the Presidency of the United States could quote with approval such a letter, from a man who has thus treated his country, is equally astonishing.

If you consulted him on a matter of American policy, ignorant of the above facts, what is the American people to think of your political knowledge and wisdom? If you consulted him knowing the above facts, what are we to think of your manliness and patriotism?

For Prince Bismarck, as the statesman who has compacted a great Empire, and the patriot whose foremost wish has always been the advancement of his own country, I have profound respect; but he has always held Democratic and Republican government in contempt; and having been present more than once when he has discussed the views of those from whom he differs, I can well imagine the smile, "so childlike and bland," with which he welcomed your Excellency's confiding letter, and the outburst of Titanic laughter with which he would hear that he had ensnared the great American Republic by answering you.

Nothing since his preliminary smiles and final laughter, when, in the interest of his country, he outwitted poor Napoleon III and Benedetti and Jules Favre, and at last, as he said, left the French anarchists and socialists to "stew in their own juice," could equal it.

Even if it may please your Excellency and Mr. Bryan to be enrolled in the numerous and gorgeous company of Prince Bismarck's dupes, I venture to inquire—How do you think the American people generally—"the plain people," as Abraham Lincoln called them—would feel, if they found that under the lead of Mr. Bryan and yourself they had been, by so transparent a device, added to the Prince's collection of victims, and thus made laughing stock through the world, and for all times?

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

ANDREW D. WHITE.

**END OF
TITLE**